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Montana Office of Public Instruction
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MONTANA STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES: 2000-2001

How to Interpret Test Results

The Board of Public Education requires all accredited Montana schools to report student achievement scores for grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, mathematics, science, language arts and social studies to the Office of Public Instruction. In the spring of 2001, all Montana 4th and 8th grades took the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and 11th grade students took the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED). This was the first year all Montana students participated in the same tests and should provide information.

The Montana Board of Public Education requires all students, including those with disabilities, to participate in the statewide assessments. The average statewide participation rate for the 2001 tests was 96%.

	Students Without Disabilities	Students With Disabilities	Total Tested	Spring Enrollment*	Percent of Enrolled Tested
Grade 4	10,383	1,118	11,501	11,689	98.4%
Grade 8	10,957	1,196	12,153	12,511	97.1%
Grade 11	10,294	745	11,039	11,931	92.5%
Total	31,634	3,059	34,693	36,131	96.0%

Student Privacy Rights

Federal and state statutes protect the privacy of certain student records, including test results. The Federal Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Montana privacy statutes require certain student information be protected and used only by those persons who have a direct educational responsibility for that student's instruction. OPI policy limits release of protected student information in instances where release of that information would identify a particular student.

Consequently, the release of test scores for any individual school with five or fewer students in a grade has been aggregated into "category-size totals." This involves more than 120 of Montana's smallest schools. Districts receiving requests for information must always consider whether the information released can be identified with an individual student. If a school district determines an individual student could be identified from the release of test scores, the district should not release the scores. The very small school totals have been combined to provide information on how students those schools performed.

How the Information is Organized

The state report will include information on how students in the 4th, 8th, and 11th grades performed in reading, mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies. The reports will organize the information at three levels. The information will be aggregated by state totals, totals for different school size categories, and by individual schools within each district and county.

Each schools report lists:

- the grade level taking the test
- the number of students taking each test
- the number of students enrolled
- the National Percentile Rank (NPR)
- the percentage of students at each National Stanine (NS) proficiency level within each subject area

National Percentile Rank

The National Percentile Rank (NPR), on a scale from 1-99, indicates the percent of Montana students who scored at or above the national norm. This national norm group of all students is used as the basis of comparison for Montana students in each of the three categories below. The NPR is considered an achievement score and is most useful in comparison with the national norm group. Montana students in grades 4, 8, and 11 scored significantly higher than the national norm group in all subject areas. Their performance was especially noteworthy in the subjects of reading, science, and social studies.

	Students without Disabilities	Students with Disabilities	All Students
Grade 4			
Reading	70	30	67
Math	63	30	61
Language Arts	70	30	65
Science	70	46	68
Social Studies	68	39	67
Grade 8			
Reading	65	24	61
Math	63	20	58
Language Arts	63	20	58
Science	68	34	65
Social Studies	65	30	61
Grade 11			
Reading	70	25	67
Math	67	24	63
Language Arts	67	25	65
Science	73	34	70
Social Studies	70	32	68

National Stanines

The National Stanines (NS) indicate proficiency levels on a scale from 1-9. Stanines are used to identify the distribution of students scoring at different levels of a standardized test. For purposes of reporting student proficiency levels, Montana has arranged the nine stanines into four broader performance categories of novice, nearing proficiency, proficient, and advanced.

Novice: students beginning to attain the prerequisite knowledge and skills fundamental for that subject matter. This includes the percentage of students performing at stanine 1-3 levels.

Nearing Proficiency: students with partial mastery of the prerequisite knowledge and skills fundamental for that subject matter. This includes the percentage of students performing at the stanine 4 level.

Proficient: students demonstrating competency over the subject matter including subject matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real world situations, and the analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter. This includes the percentage of students performing at stanines 5-7 levels.

Advanced: students achieving a superior mastery of the subject matter. This includes the percentage of students performing at stanine 8-9 levels.

The tables on the following pages show the national norm for each performance category and the percent of Montana students performing within each performance category. Results are shown for each subject area by each grade level (4, 8, and 11), and for students with and without disabilities, and all students.

EXAMPLE

----- Reading -----							
				Stanine 1-3	Stanine 4	Stanine 5-7	Stanine 8-9
<u>School</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Feb. Enroll</u>	<u># Tested</u>	<u>Novice</u>	<u>Nearing Proficiency</u>	<u>Proficient</u>	<u>Advanced</u>
School A	4	72	69	10%	12%	49%	29%
Montana Average	4			13%	14%	59%	14%
National Average	4			23%	17%	49%	11%

In the above example, “School A” reported the results for 69 of 72 of their fourth graders who the ITBS test for reading. Among those students, 10% were at the novice level, 12% were nearing proficiency, and 49% were at the proficient level and 29% performed at the advanced level for 4th grade reading.

At “School A” 78% of the 4th grade students scored at the proficient or advanced levels in reading. This was somewhat better than the Montana average for fourth graders where 73% scored at the proficient and advanced levels. Of particular note is the high percentage of “School A” students performing at the advanced level.

Grade 4

	Grade	Subject	Novice	Nearing Proficiency	Proficient	Advanced
National Norm			23%	17%	49%	11%
Students without Disabilities	4	Reading	7%	10%	61%	22%
Students with Disabilities	4	Reading	40%	24%	32%	3%
All Students	4	Reading	10%	11%	58%	20%
Students without Disabilities	4	Math	9%	13%	61%	16%
Students with Disabilities	4	Math	43%	22%	34%	2%
All Students	4	Math	13%	14%	59%	14%
Students without Disabilities	4	Language Arts	7%	12%	60%	21%
Students with Disabilities	4	Language Arts	40%	28%	30%	2%
All Students	4	Language Arts	10%	14%	57%	19%
Students without Disabilities	4	Science	7%	9%	61%	24%
Students with Disabilities	4	Science	20%	20%	52%	8%
All Students	4	Science	8%	10%	60%	22%
Students without Disabilities	4	Social Studies	8%	11%	54%	26%
Students with Disabilities	4	Social Studies	28%	24%	42%	6%
All Students	4	Social Studies	10%	13%	53%	24%

Grade 8

	Grade	Subject	Novice	Nearing Proficiency	Proficient	Advanced
National Norm			23%	17%	49%	11%
Students without Disabilities	8	Reading	9%	12%	60%	18%
Students with Disabilities	8	Reading	52%	22%	24%	2%
All Students	8	Reading	14%	13%	57%	16%
Students without Disabilities	8	Math	12%	15%	57%	16%
Students with Disabilities	8	Math	59%	21%	19%	1%
All Students	8	Math	17%	15%	53%	15%
Students without Disabilities	8	Language Arts	9%	14%	62%	14%
Students with Disabilities	8	Language Arts	61%	24%	15%	0%
All Students	8	Language Arts	14%	15%	58%	13%
Students without Disabilities	8	Science	7%	11%	62%	19%
Students with Disabilities	8	Science	37%	24%	37%	3%
All Students	8	Science	10%	12%	60%	18%
Students without Disabilities	8	Social Studies	10%	14%	58%	18%
Students with Disabilities	8	Social Studies	41%	27%	29%	3%
All Students	8	Social Studies	13%	15%	55%	16%

Grade 11

	Grade	Subject	Novice	Nearing Proficiency	Proficient	Advanced
National Norm			23%	17%	49%	11%
Students without Disabilities	11	Reading	7%	12%	59%	23%
Students with Disabilities	11	Reading	48%	27%	24%	2%
All Students	11	Reading	10%	13%	56%	21%
Students without Disabilities	11	Math	9%	11%	62%	19%
Students with Disabilities	11	Math	52%	25%	22%	1%
All Students	11	Math	12%	12%	59%	17%
Students without Disabilities	11	Language Arts	7%	13%	62%	18%
Students with Disabilities	11	Language Arts	45%	33%	22%	1%
All Students	11	Language Arts	10%	14%	60%	17%
Students without Disabilities	11	Science	8%	8%	61%	23%
Students with Disabilities	11	Science	38%	21%	39%	2%
All Students	11	Science	10%	9%	59%	22%
Students without Disabilities	11	Social Studies	6%	10%	63%	21%
Students with Disabilities	11	Social Studies	36%	30%	32%	2%
All Students	11	Social Studies	8%	11%	61%	20%

Final Note

These reports are just one of the tools we can use to assess how well Montana students are mastering their subject areas. We need to identify and support those programs and strategies that are successful. We also need to direct energy and resources to those students who are having difficulty learning.

These scores are a “snapshot” of our schools at a particular point in time. It is absolutely critical we use this information in a constructive manner to help all students improve their academic achievement. It should be the goal of every school to continually strive to move each student to higher performance levels.

We know there is much more to a good school than test scores alone. While tests are important, they are not the only indicators of a quality school. We expect local districts will combine this testing information with additional measures such as changes over time, programs targeted to specific schools and support services available to students to improve performance in their schools.

There will be those who will misuse this information to construct a “ranking” of Montana schools. Such “rankings” have serious flaws. It is an inappropriate and not a particularly helpful use of the test score information.

There is no such thing as “my” kids are doing well, but “yours” are doing poorly. They are all our children. The entire system of education in Montana benefits when we seek to provide a quality education for every child.